

PREFACE.

CHARLES DICKENS observes with much truth, that "though seldom read, prefaces are continually written." It may be asked and even wondered, why? I cannot say that I know the exact reason, but it seems to me that they may carry the same weight, in the literary world, that certain *sotto voce* explanations, which oftentimes accompany the introduction of one person to another, do in the social world.

If it is permitted, in bringing some quaint, old-fashioned little body, before a gathering of your more fastidious friends, at once to reconcile them to his or her strange, ungainly mien, and to justify yourself for acknowledging an intimacy with so eccentric a creature, by following up the prosy and unsuggestive: "Mr. B——, ladies and gentlemen," or "Miss M——, ladies and gentlemen," with such a refreshing paraphrase as, "brother-in-law of the celebrated Lord Marnaduke Pulsifer," or, "confidential companion, to the wife of the late distinguished Christopher Quill the American Poet"—why should not a like privilege be extended the labour-worn author, when he ushers the crude and unattractive offspring of his own undaunted energy into the arena of literary life?

Mr. B——, without the whispered guarantee of his relative importance, would never be noticed unless to be riled or ridiculed; and so with many a meek and modest volume, whose key-note has never been sounded, or if sounded has never been heard.